

Course title: Luminous Things: Ways of Reading and Enjoying Poetry

Course description:

First, forget everything you have learned, that poetry is difficult, / that it cannot be appreciated by the likes of you,

...

Treat a poem like dirt, humus rich and heavy from the garden. Later on, it will become the fat tomatoes and golden squash piled high upon your kitchen table.

Read just one poem a day.

Someday a book of poems may open in your hands like a daffodil offering its cup / to the sun.

When you can name five poets / without including Bob Dylan, when you exceed your quota / and don't even notice, close this manual.

Congratulations. / You can now read poetry.

From: "How to Read a Poem: Beginner's Manual" by Pamela Spiro Wagner

In this class, we will share our ways of reading and enjoying poetry. We may delve into particular poets as selected by class participants, and we will delve more deeply into that poets' techniques, such as paradox, irony, metaphor, imagery, symbolism, rhyme, allusion, etc. Our goal: To fall in love with poetry.

Text: Neil Astley, ed. *Being Alive. The sequel to Staying Alive.* From \$7 to \$18 at Amazon.

Suggested text: M. Zapruder, *Why Poetry.* \$10 at Amazon.

Format: Discussion. Each meeting, two or three class members will lead discussions about poems they have selected from the selected anthology; they may also provide background on the poem &/or poet. The coordinators will provide question sets and guides on various to ways to read poems and on various poetic techniques.

Coordinators: Linda Shamon and Chris Rose. They have each coordinated numerous LLC courses in the arts, music and literature categories. They are eager to share their enthusiasm for poetry and look forward to exploring ways of reading a poem with class members.

**Luminous Things: Ways of Reading and Enjoying Poetry Book: Being Alive, Neil Astley,
editor: Course Calendar**

Date	<i>Being Alive</i> Weekly Assignments	Discussion leaders
Friday Sept. 25	Exploring the World Pgs. 22 – 48	Part 1: Linda, Chris, Karen Part 2: Breakout Rooms; whole class discussion
Friday Oct. 2	Taste and See Pgs. 50 - 107	Part 1: Linda, Chris, Karen Part 2: Guest: Tina Cane, RI Poet Laureate
		Volunteers needed ↓
Friday Oct. 9	Family Pgs. 108 - 179	Part 1: Joan Ramos Part 2:
Friday Oct. 16	Love Life Pgs. 180 - 211	Part 1: Part 2:
Friday Oct. 23	Men and Women Pgs. 212 - 257	Part 1: Kik Williams Part 2:
Friday Oct. 30	Being and Loss Pgs. 258 - 305	Part 1: Patricia Bisshopp “The Emperor of Ice Cream” Stevens; “The Circus Animals’ Desertion.” Yeats Part 2:
Friday Nov. 6	Daily Round Pgs. 306 - 353	Part 1: Part 2
Friday Nov. 13	Lives Pgs. 354 - 397	Part 1: Margery Connor, “Still I Rise” Part 2:
Friday Nov. 20	Mad World Pgs. 398 - 443	Part 1 & 2: Paul Wortman: “Reality Demands” W. Szyborska
Friday Dec. 4	Ends and Beginnings Pgs. 444 - 483	Part 1: Helen Magen, “Four Quartets”

**Guidelines and Suggestions for Leading a Discussion in
LLC's *Luminous Things: Ways of Reading and Enjoying Poetry* - Fall 2020**

- Select one poem that has caught your attention from among the those in the unit and share your responses and questions. This might include reading the poem aloud (or a section of it), then going through it line by line, and sharing your evolving responses, insights, questions, emotions, associations, etc. as the poem unfolds. As you go along you might point out aspects of the language, form, structure, imagery, voice, and so on, that have caught your attention; or you might ask the class to help you bring these aspects of the poem to our attention. Along the way, you might explain why you have selected this poem, what draws you to it, what about the poem will stay with you, if you might look for other poems by this poet, and so on.
- Select two or more poems by different poets that have caught your attention from among the those in the assigned section in the text and share your responses and questions. These poems might take opposite or similar approaches to the stated theme of the unit. In this case, your comparing and contrasting the poems—their similar or contrasting features of language, voice, imagery, tone, intention, etc., and your experiences of reading through the poems, would be a way of helping us to delve more deeply into each of them and into the overall theme of the unit. As time allows, you might read specific parts aloud, you are free to concentrate on one more than the other, and you might pose questions for the class about the contrasts or similarities among the poems, poets or themes. Also, you might explain why you have selected these poems, what draws you to them, what about the poems will stay with you, if you might look for other poems by these poets, and so on.
- Select a poet who has caught your attention and whose poems appear in the current section and in other sections in the book. In this case, you would certainly explain what draws you to this poet's poems—what is appealing, surprising, satisfying, and meaningful for you. You could point to the several poems in the anthology by the author—their similarities and differences, and then take us through one that has become important to you. This might entail following the suggestions listed in the above paragraphs. A suggestion: We think this option would work well if the poet is new to you or if you take us through poems new to you but written by a poet familiar to you. Of course, you are welcome to focus on a poet and poem you know well—a favorite poem, for example—but we hope that as you take us through the poems, you will share points of entry or questions that allow others to join the discussion and share their insights. (No lectures, please!)
- Select a poet in our anthology who has caught your attention and introduce us to the poetry of that poet. In this case you might do a bit of research to provide a *very short* biography or to provide important contextual details about the poet and the poetry. It would seem natural, too, for you to explain what draws you to this poet's poems—what is appealing, surprising, satisfying, and meaningful for you. Also, if there is a poem that is a favorite of yours that is not in our anthology and if you can share the text of it with the class beforehand, you are welcome to make that poem part of your presentation. We ask, however, that you pay some attention to a poem by that poet that appears in our anthology. Most of all, we expect you will help us read through a couple of poems that you find typical of this poet—pointing out the features that are typical and that delight you or puzzle you, and along the way, sharing points of entry or questions that allow others to join the discussion and share their insights.